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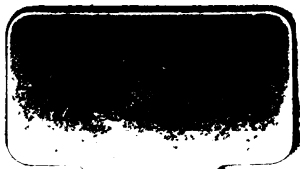
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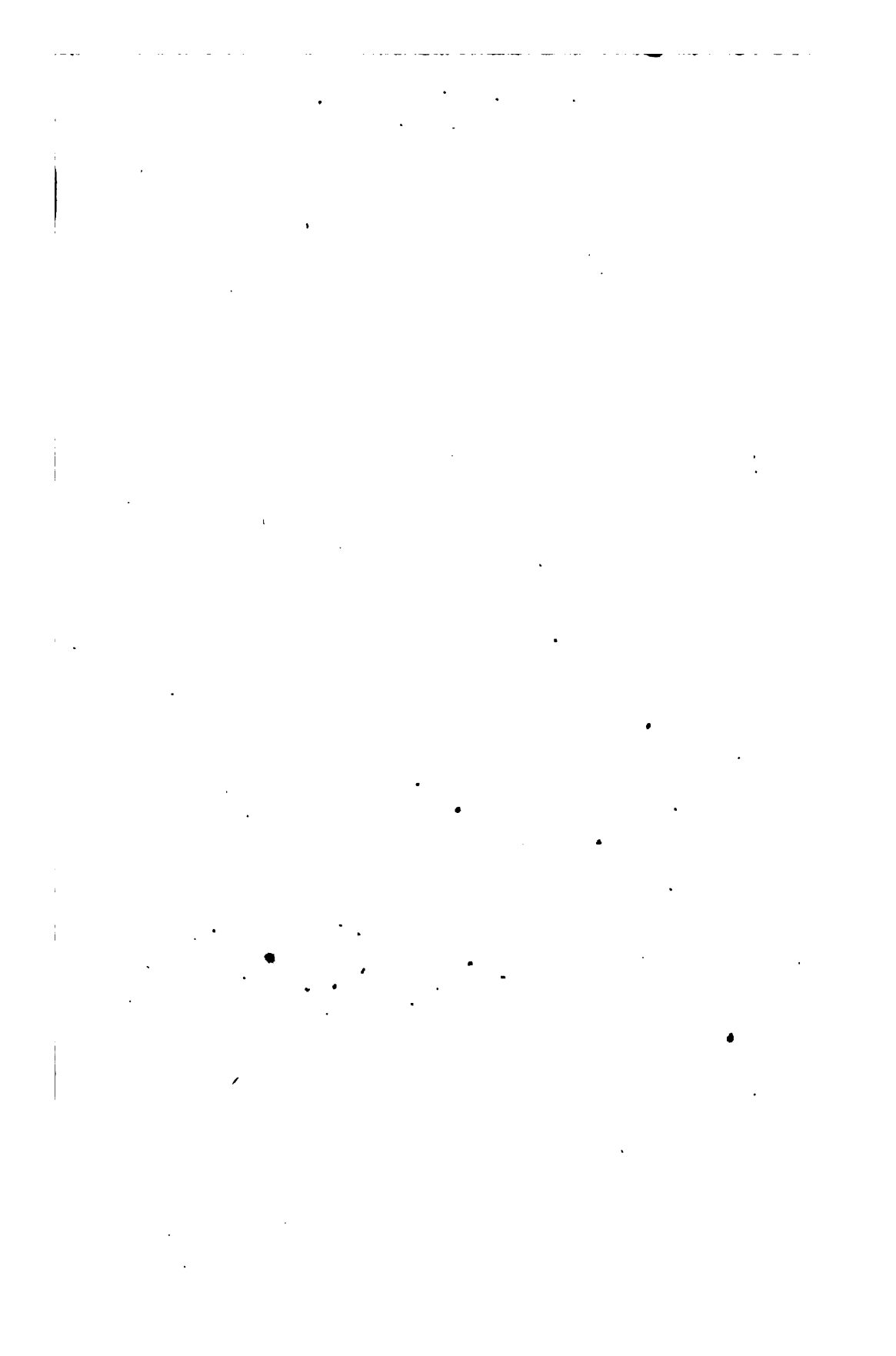
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FIFTY MORE SONNETS.

FIFTY MORE SONNETS

ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

By M. MONTAGU.

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.

"Un Sonnet sans défauts vaut seul un long Poème."

BOILEAU, A. P. II. 94.

"From grave to gay, from lively to severe."

POPE. Epl. IV. 370.

LONDON.

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DEDICATION.



TO MY FRIENDS.

AS BEFORE.

M. M.



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NOTES.



PREFACE.

THE following are a Sequel to the FIFTY SONNETS printed last year under that Title.

When those were put forth I had no intention whatever of following them up by any more, as stated at P. xiii of the Preface to them : but, from the want—or rather impossibility—of any better occupation, and to relieve the tedium of a Sick Bed, I have indulged myself in the composition of these additional ones ; which I venture to hope, at all events for their intention if not execution, will be not less freely accepted than their precursors. With this trust “ We ” now entype them.

To add a few words to our First Preface :
As to our older Sonnets, every body, who has at all occupied himself with the matter, knows those of Spencer, Shakspeare,¹ the Sidneys—Surreys—and the Wyatts, and admire them, or fancy they do so, according to the general estimation of their Writers : But, for myself, I am free to confess that, for the most part, the far-fetched sentiments and *concetti*, the over-strained expression of these ; with, in their mechanism, the irregularity of the rhymes ; and the striding of the sense from one line to the other in the subdivisions, often quite destroying the pleasing artificialness of the Poem, very much to me impairs their whatever intrinsic excellence : Moreover they are little either imaginative or practical, but chiefly personal to the writers and their loves ; which very soon tires the unsympathising Reader. But this said with hesitation, and all due deference to the better judgement of others. Our more modern great Poets, those of our so-called “ Augustan age,” have seldom given us any, perhaps from considering the comparative trivialness of the thing.

¹ See for Notes at the End.

Within the present Century there have appeared several Separate Original Collections : Of others, that of the late Mr. Capel Lofft, in not less than five Volumes,* is by much the most full and various, comprising Translations as well as Originals : And most of our Poets and Poetesses have included some among their other Poems ; but on the merits of which, as interested Parties, it would not become “ us ” here to expatiate.

There occasionally appear two or more consecutive Sonnets on the same subject, either from its not being completed in the first or otherwise continuing it : but which is entirely at variance with the true character of the Poem, that of being complete in itself. It is only less bad than *Benserade's*² absurd Translation of *Ovid* in french Rondeaux. 1676.

As to the arbitrary or irregular collocation of the rhymes, one might as well call any Stanza of nine lines, however the rhymes should be placed, a Spencerian one ; which surely would never be admitted. Such can only be allowed in *Fourteeners*.

* Anthology, &c: 12^{mo}. London. 1812-14.

² Born ——. Died 1690.

In the short account given of THE SONNET in the preceding Series it might have been well to notice the Form—the *contour*, so to say—its outward delineation or profile. This with us is very different; some “ranging” (as the Printers call it) the lines according to the rhymes, that is—the same being parallelly placed; some placing them quite arbitrarily, observing no regular form at all; and others continuously, as if they were successive couplets. The form here adopted is that invariably used by the Italians from the first construction of the Poem; as also by the French; and which may therefor be regarded as the more legitimate one: moreover I consider it as intrinsically the best; leaving no uncertainty about the point, but declaring at once by its form what the thing is, and as very often much assisting the sense by its decided character.

But of all this the Reader will judge for himself: so we leave it in his hands.

M. M.

ENVOY.

SONNET.

WHEN late to SONNETS we attuned the string,
For offering them to Friends : from sometime past,
Our years and failing health considering,
We meant they — at least in Print — should be our last.
But Nature will not change : tho' awhile off-cast,
Our native habits to us still will cling ;
And Song's sweet mania, inly rooted fast,
Defies expulsion while there 's voice to sing.
So since, again uptaking our *old* lyre,
Anew rekindling with Poetic fire (!?)
We 've to the previous FIFTY added these :
Inscribed to those same Friends ; indulgent still,
Who for the power will take the wish to please,
And kindly for the deed accept the will.

1861.

THE SONNET.

SONNET 1.

“SCORN not the Sonnet.” Wordsworth, strongly plain,
In one of his* has eloquently sung
How Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Camoens, strung
Their lyres to this, for soothing whatso pain.
Nor less, preceders in the Muses’ train,
Our Spencer, Shakspeare, minor ones among,
And lofty Milton of “the trumpet tongue,”
Assuag’d their cares with its harmonious strain.
So I (if I near such great names as his
May dare place mine) have long been wont with this
My sad or idle moments to beguile.
But feel, alas! unlike, in every view,
The sightless Bard’s of Britain’s favour’d Isle,
That mine too many and feeble are ’stead “few.”

1861.

* See his Sonnet beginning like this one.

HAPPY ENGLAND.

SONNET 2.

“ O, HAPPY ye, if ye but knew your bliss !”
Erst to some murmuring Rustics VIRGIL* said.
Nor less might to us English be said this,
To our own good so often blind and dead.
Yea, thrice blest our's ! A happier Land none tread :
A fruitful soil, a temperate clime hers is ;
Nor but to general evils subjected,
While no one real earthly good to miss.
From natural — if not moral — evils free,
No fear of hurricanes — earthquakes — floods has she ;
While Ocean's wave protects her — home and hearth ;
With Manners 'neath a pure Religion's sway,
A Government the perfectest on Earth,
'Bove all — just laws, like rights, and LIBERTY.

1861.

* Georgics. ii. 458.

LIBERTY.

SONNET 3.

Boon of impartial Heaven, to none denied,
Hail, *Liberty* ! thou " Form Divine on Earth :"
Sans which e'en Life itself is nothing worth,
Howe'er with whatso other good allied.
By whatso arbitrary bonds untied,
Hail, light-wing'd *Freedom*, Thou of Heavenly birth !
Best Guardian Thou of Country — home — and hearth,
For which a Sidney — Hampden — Russell died.
Not Licence thou ; far different ; and but such
As by the just — good — wise — approved, unstain'd
By whatso wrong : This *Our's* : Never priz'd too much,
May it *Our's* still be, at cost of whatso strife,
'Gainst home or foreign tyranny maintain'd ;
Nor e'er to be surrender'd but with Life !

1861.

ASTRONOMY.

SONNET 4.

ASTRONOMY, of Sciences The First :

Enabling us, for points in Time and Space—
 Bounds there are none, the Stellar Orbs to trace,
 As instituted from primeval erst :

To scan how rul'd by laws that ne'er revers'd,—
 Or those that in their seemingly fix'd place,
 Or these careering with appointed pace,
 In order'd march continually rehears'd.

How bright the path here by the Student trod !
 While led “ thro' Nature up to Nature's God,”*
 Seeing all His works in greatness—glory—clad.

Well said the Poet, summing up, defin'd,—
 “ An undevout Astronomer is mad.”†
 Yea any so can scarce be sound of mind.

1861.

* POPE. Epl. iv. 382.

† YOUNG. Night ix. 772.

THE MILKY WAY.

SONNET 5.

Lo—glittering where “ The Milky Way : ” so known,
As call’d from its lacteal hue, that mars
All duller white ; while countless distance bars
To scan the Space with myriad Worlds distrown.
How vast—sublime—the spectacle there shown,
In all of generals or particulars !
Perhaps each one of those innumerable Stars
Centres themselves, with systems of their own.
O wondrous ALL, in gloriousness array’d !
Grand evidences of Almighty Power,
Proclaiming GOD in all His works display’d.
Yet Man, poor—weak—frail Man, whose every end
Is vainness mere, misusing Life’s short span,
Breaking His Law, shall dare that God offend !

CONDUCT IS FATE.

SONNET 6.

IN failure of whate'er we would obtain,
In general disappointment, of what not—
Of others—of ill-luck—of our hard lot,
Nay e'en of Heaven we often dare complain:
While blind to see what so easy to explain,—
That but on judgement, industry, on naught
But perseverance in what rightly wrought,
Success attends, with gladness in its train.
Then let us not on others cast, much less
On bounteous Heaven, the blame of ill-success;
But in ourselves its real causes see.
Conduct is Fate: as wise or unwise this,
As good or bad, so will our fortunes be,
Ourselves the authors of our destinies.

1861.

MANNERS.

SONNET 7.

Too often, self-deceived about their claims,
The favour'd ones of Fortune—chance events,
Or those of Nature, boast, perverting names,
As their deserts what are but accidents.
But Truth far differently this represents;
Showing that, unless in all they 've worthy aims,
With due repression of their evil bents,
The more their parts and gifts—the more their blames.
Nor less than those, in points of lighter weight;
Showing in their intercourse with Small or Great
The true politeness of benevolence.
In birth, wealth, parts, or outward show, we scan
Not merit but mere chance: In its large sense
This understood, 't is “Manners make the Man.”

1861.

EARLY DEATH.³

SONNET 8.

“ THE loved ones of The Gods (some Antient says)
“ Die young, and those most lov'd the earliest fall.”
And haply true (if paradoxical)
Since all desire and pray for lengthen'd days.
For thus they 'scape, in innocence withal,
Life's various ills ; each ailing that downweighs,
Each vain regret that on the aged preys
For — if not worse — Youth's faults and follies all.
Yet this an ill-consider'd view, nor close ;
Since, if its ills escape, they equally —
With those of sense — Life's higher pleasures lose ;
And chief, if conscious of well-spending this,
The glorious prospect and expectancy
Of Future Life in never-ending bliss !

1860.

THE DEAD.

SONNET 9.

“ SAY nothing of The Dead but good.” We ’re told
Of eld— *De mortuis nisi bonum nil.*
And this a generous maxim, kind of will,
Not faults now past redeeming to unfold.
But less indulgent Moralists may hold
That *true* for “ good ” perhaps were better still;
To make, by showing and stigmatizing ill,
Its practice more efficiently controul’d.
Be this as may: Take neither all on trust;
As Charity may go out of its way,
And Justice over-strict may be unjust.
Meanwhile, here *true* being fully understood,
So order we our lives, that nothing may
In life or death be said of us but *good*.

1861.

THE AIR BALLOON.⁴

SONNET 10.

Lo where, with gas inflated, the Balloon
Ascends the Sky, as if a living thing ;
In trust with safety to descend anon,
Perhaps destruction with descent to bring.
So Phaeton, erst, his car mismanaging,
With his unruly team came toppling down ;
And Icarus so, on artificial wing,
Fancied to fly, in the Egean to drown.
But what will not audacious man attempt !
In his bold pride, from fear or doubt exempt,
He braves or the empty air or treacherous wave :
And well, while with all prudence doing this ;
Allow'd to employ the gifts which Heaven him gave
To improve his lot in all that not amiss.

1861.

BALLOON *LOQUITUR*.

SONNET 11.*

Lo the World's wonder and its jest combin'd !
At once with lightness and expanse I swell ;
While fire beneath, and fume about, impel,
I soar aloft, and trust me to the wind.
But while my way in this new road I feel
For Man, no more to Land and Sea confin'd,
Mistrustful of the event, for ease of mind,
I thus to Parent Nature make appeal.—
Thou, All's Great Mother ! here determining me,
If for Man's good to sail the air it be,
Do thou confirm and aid his bold design :
But if for ill, with profitless expense
Of time and pains, me to my flames consign ;
Of Man's rash folly a lasting evidence.

1861.

* From the Italian of PARINI.

THE SENSES.

SONNET 12.

As from the deadliest things, e'en poisons fell,
Some healing virtue may be drawn by art,—
From Life's most ills, alleviating in part,
Some good may be deduced, to countervail.
So in the Senses' loss: First—that of Smell;
Thence spared bad scents; of Hearing—words that smart;
Of Sight—all scenes that shock or pain impart:
Touch mostly lasts us out, and Taste as well.
But there 's another, ever practical,
That nought makes up for, not bestowed on all,—
Which is *Good Sense*, worth much of the other five:
That makes us in Life's ills, be what they may,
While thanking Heaven for what it deigns to give,
Resign'd to what withholds or takes away.

WHAT DO WE LIVE FOR.

SONNET 13.

“WHAT do we live for?” Question seldom ask’d;
Yea all too seldom of ourselves enquired;
And that, for our best interests desired,
Should be replied to—rigidly self-task’d.
For business some, some wealth—howe’er acquired;
For pleasure those, in joy’s bright sun still bask’d,
Well if not worse—by decent seeming mask’d;
For nothing these, within themselves retired.
But not for this was on us life bestowed;
But, while enjoying its good, pursuing its road
As but to another leading after this.
To obey God’s law, our Fellow-men befriend,
In all our duties ever unremiss,—
This is what we should live for—Life’s true end.

TO THE MOON.

SONNET 14.

HAIL, beauteous Moon! of argent-beaming shine,
Our night illuming with reflected day;
While 'tending us, pursuing thy mark'd out way
Within the bounds that our own Earth confine.
How wondrous all the influences thine!
Not only ruling, with periodic sway,
The watery waste; but also, so some say,
The human frame and mind, as if divine.
E'en as ourselves, in Space an Ocean Isle;
Perhaps, like us, inhabited awhile
By Mortals hopeful of a future Heaven.
While both pursuing our respective roads,
Protect us Thou, if this to thee be given,
From or Sick-Beds, crack'd-brains, or Ocean Floods.

1861.

TRUE PHILANTHROPY.

SONNET 15.

O IF, instead the hatred now that fills
 Men's hearts 'gainst one another, urging even
 Their lives to seek ; while hardness shuts and chills ;
 Love might them warm, for which was life us given,—
 How different were our lot ! our wayward wills
 To reason — ruth — subdued, nor passion-driven :
 Yea then were Earth, despite its 'scapeless ills,
 A paradise and harbinger of Heaven.
 How fine that saying of the Roman Slave,*
 Whose genius — merit — worth — him Freedom gave,
 Compassionating all the cares that press
 On poor Mankind : “ I am a Man (said he)
 “ And nought that human foreign is to me.”*
 Sublime avowal, and worthy an Angel's say !

1861.

* Homo sum : humani nihil a me alienum puto.

TERENTIUS. Heautontimorumenos. Act i. Sc. i. V: 24.

THE COLOURS.

SONNET 16.

PHILOSOPHERS say that, distinctly hued,
The Primary Colours are but Seven : ranged so —
Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo,
And *Violet*, as in the Rainbow view'd.
While *Black* and *White*, as with no tints imbued,
They hold as none : yet strange that these, to show
The most pronounc'd of all, should not be, tho'
They call some shades so scarce with hues endued.
The name too for a National Flag is used :
O, while by no injustice e'er abused,
Still may OLD ENGLAND'S we triumphant see !
'Bove all ne'er wear False Colours, for its cheats ;
But, good — bad — or indifferent, as may be,
Show as we are ; so at least no hypocrites.

1861.

PUNCTUATION.

SONNET 17.

PUNCTUATION is the art of sep'rating,

While linking them, the parts of a Discourse;

By Marks call'd *Stops*, of different power or force;

As sequent follow here, diminishing.

The *Period* or *Full Stop* . the *Colon* :

The *Semicolon* ; *Comma* , *Leaders*⁵ *Dots*

Interrogations ? *Admiration's Notes* !

Dash — *Brackets* { } and *Parentheses* () just Ten.

'Twere vain, within the narrow space here our's,

Attempt defining their respective powers;

This only, with their names, their forms displays:

But there 's another, that quite over-tops

The literal one, a moral sense, that says,

Concerning Life and Manners, "*Mind your Stops.*"

NE QUID NIMIS.

SONNET 18.

THE *Ne quid nimis** of the Roman Bard :

In general “ Not too much of anything : ”

Within due bounds all wisely limiting,

An excellent rule is, worthy all regard.

One cannot be too much upon one's guard

Against extremes, whence evils ever spring ;

For, by exceeding and exaggerating,

The very best intentions may be marr'd.

Of things done insufficiently, scarce none

But may be improved by *more* ; but, overdone,

Attempts to mend them mostly make worse still.

To say it in fewer words, more briefly express'd :

Avoid Excess ; that always leads to ill :

In every thing still *Moderateness* is best.

1861.

* TERENCE. *Andria*, Act. i. S. 2. L. 34.

H E A L T H.

SONNET 19.

O BLESSED *Health* ! the Frame's all perfectness ;
 Sans which no other good is fully enjoy'd ;
 Whose presence cheers — gilds — all embellishes,
 And absence leaves a never fill'd-up void :
 By whatsoever Earthly ills annoy'd,
 This reconciles to all ; who this possess,
 With " peace and competence," howe'er alloy'd,
 Have all that makes Life's real happiness.
 Yet still we indulge our senses at its cost ;
 By excess — imprudence — folly of every kind ;
 Nor its just value prizing until lost.
 Here Health of Soul being chiefly understood,
 Well said the Bard, — " In Body sound — sound mind " *
 Lies Life's true *summum bonum*, the highest good.

1861.

* JUVENAL. Sat. x. 356.

DOGS.

SONNET 20.

How sad to see brute beasts, Dogs 'specially,
Petted as if they human beings were ;
Nurs'd, fondled, pamper'd ; while without a care
For our own Species, be their wants what may.
'Tis true they've one great point—Fidelity :
Tho' this not principle, but instinct mere ;
Nought warranting the laudings given them here,
As being but a natural quality.
Nay surely " Beasts that perish " * cannot claim
What due to Immortal Souls, of highest aim
And ends ; while their's are only cover and food.
According to the Creature's attributes
Should be its usage, in all cases good :
Men should like Men be treated, Brutes like Brutes.⁶

1861.

* Ps. 49. 12.

CAGED BIRDS.

SONNET 21.⁷

SEE the light Squirrel, 'stead green boughs among,
His treadmill climbing, ne'er on top arrived.
See in bonds, still bonds—howe'er for ease contrived,
The Linnet, Starling, all the Birds of Song.
O ye, fair jailors of the tuneful throng!
What would your feelings be, if thus engyved,
If of delightful freedom thus deprived,
In chains a sad existence to prolong.
If Pets your chief affections must possess,
The lap-dog fondle, kitten—cat—caress;
But give your captive wild-ones liberty.
Think what must be their woes,—estranged without,
Within all lonely pining life away,
Still in their carols crying "I can't get out!"

1861.

PHILOSOPHY.

SONNET 22.

WHATE'ER of greater they may boast to do,
Whate'er their knowledge—powers—or parts may be,—
Philosophers are oft but Sages, who
Further than others can thro' a millstone see.
From “bigotry” and “prejudices” free,
They affect to value things as but they're true;
Still putting forth their notions, on this plea,
Regardless of what ills may thence ensue.
“Philosophy” the Love of Wisdom is;
And which consists in shunning all amiss,
Pursuing but that whence may some good arise.
So, while in all to Heaven's dread Law obedient,
Pursue we Truth—while in its utterance wise,
As lawful things may yet be inexpedient.*

1861.

* Cor. i. 10. 23.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE.

SONNET 23.

O FOR the vain presumptuousness of Man !
To think, because some few have been made out,
That Nature's workings may be traced throughout ;
So studies making Gold on her own plan.
Yet not all lost the labour : for, his scan
Some of her processes to light have brought,
Far worthier than the Transmutator sought,
And, e'en as gain, more profitable than.
But, had a moral crucible been used,
With Reason for the solvent—that alone,
The amalgam at once had been produced.
Within ourselves the secret here we hold :
Contentment is the true Philosopher's Stone,
Converting all it touches into gold.

GAIN.

SONNET 24.

“GAIN :” mostly used with some contemptuousness
For its pursuers, and conveying slur ;
As if no calling could respect confer
Save wholly free from interestedness !
But how if Commerce, all that gives a stir
And charm to life, its various businesses,
Science — Letters — Art, were to be profitless ? —
Who in them would engage without this spur ?
And who, of any energy, but has
Some goal in view, some object to attain,
By which to be distinguish’d from the mass.
Let not mere names mislead us : rightly view’d
All aims — ends — are but different forms of gain ;
And all are good that honourably pursued.

THE MISER.

SONNET 25.

Lo there the useless—wretched Miser see :
Still gold on gold uphoarding, his sole bliss ;
To make one doubt if from mere avarice this,
Or if disease—insanity it be.
For but the means of making these things his,
Denying himself all comforts ; on the plea
Of not requiring them, as if wants-free ;
The substance for the shadow thus to miss.
So *Midas*, in the Pagan tale of old,
Was shown as starving 'midst abundance round,
While all he tasted instant turn'd to gold.
So *Tantalus* was pictur'd as immers'd
Up to his chin in water, dying of thirst.
Fools ! wanting all, while they with all abound.

FOUL SONG.

SONNET 26.

How sad so oft to see, Mankind among,
The noblest gifts of bounteous Heaven abus'd !
What should but for their benefit be used,
Perverted to their injury and wrong.
'Bove all — the lofty-soaring Art of Song ;
Whose chief design should be, in naught misused,
While by it warn'd — instructed — cheer'd — amused,
In Virtue's paths to lead the erring throng.
Yea palsied be the hand, however skill'd,
Like latent poison from sweet herbs distill'd,
That tunes the string to aught corrupting theme !
Not guilty less, while more pernicious, than
The Atheist crew who impiously blaspheme,
The enemies alike of God and Man !

THE READY WRITER'S PEN.

SONNET 27.

ESPECIAL gifts are on some Men bestow'd,
The higher powers or manual or of mind;
Of whom chief those, still more of both combin'd,
That with "The Ready Writer's Pen,"* endow'd:
Enabling them at once thoughts' every kind—
Ideas—to realise, while in the mood;
Which those, tho' otherwise of parts as good,
Not so endowed, impracticable find.
But, as in all too great facilities,
Here danger lies; for, as the Poet says,—
"A word once utter'd flies beyond recall."†
There's an old Adage that applies in this
To pen as tongue, well borne in mind by all,—
"The less that said—the sooner mended is."

1861.

* Judges. v. 14.

† HORACE. Epl. i. 18. 71.

DONOTHINGERS.

SONNET 28.

UNHAPPY they, howe'er they may possess
All earthly goods, when past Life's busy prime,
Who have no occupation for their time,
Self-doom'd to vacancy and listlessness.
Their stagnant lives all blank and objectless ;
All passive vice, nor far indeed from crime ;
Alike at home, or 'neath some foreign clime,
Their chief pursuit the Table's variedness.
Nor Letters—Science—Art for them have charms ;
No generous fire for usefulness them warms ;
Enslaved to luxury—sensualness—and sloth.
O wretched Wights ! self-laid on shameful shelves,
Scorn'd or forgot ; tho' with full means for both,
Doing nothing or for others or themselves.

1861.

THE WEATHERCOCK.

SONNET 29.

THE Winds' light Index (" Weathercock " we say)
The Winds, to some good bringing—to others ill ;
Blowing as they list, beyond all human skill
To tell whence from and whither wend their way.*
Just emblem this of Man's inconstancy ;
By gusts of passion—fancy—wayward will —
Turn'd here and there, diverging—shifting still,
And only certain in uncertainty.
O that we would, by reason—calm of soul,
Those passions—fancies—wayward wills controul,
So as to ne'er indulge them to our woe !
With moral so as with the gales of air,
Trimming our sails according as they blow,
By prudence making every wind prove fair.

1861.

* JOHN. 3. 8.

TOWN AND COUNTRY.

SONNET 30.

SOME laud the Country ; for its pleasant sites,
For its pure air, its freshness, and green fields ;
For all the various pleasurements it yields,
Its out-door sports, and peaceful home delights :
Others the Town ; for all the gloss that gilds,
Its busy streets, life—stir—its shows and sights ;
Each novel wonder that the view invites ;
Science—Letters—Art, all that from tedium shields.
Thus both have their good points, as each befit ;
Those mostly improve the frame, these sharpen wit,
By exertion those—and observation these.
Both should be proved : Besides, if nothing loth,
Variety and change will always please,
And healthful are to mind and body both.

1861.

THE *HABEAS CORPUS*.

SONNET 31.

THE *Habeas Corpus* is an "Act," whereby
One may be liberated from the clutch
Of Catchpoles, Tip-staffs, *et hoc omne* such,
Who hold you in durance vile illegally :
Compelling them, while showing good reason why,
To free you at once from their polluting touch ;
Transferring you, as fair and juster much,
Before The regular Courts your cause to try.
But there's a case exceptional to this,
And of an awful frequency ; which is—
That when *Old Nick* a Culprit takes, his prey,
He never lets him go. Beware we then
Of e'er offending, in whatever way,
Or 'gainst the Law or 'gainst our Fellow-Men.

1861.

FAME.

SONNET 32.⁸

For Fame—Renown—a Memory on Earth
 (That wish by our great Epic Bard defin'd
 “ The last infirmity of noble mind.”)*
What numbers sigh—what various claims put forth !
But, what is this ! mere breath—a passing wind,
 All valueless as to intrinsic worth ;
Full oft acquir'd in virtue's greatest dearth,
 While miss'd by merit of the highest kind.
And what to the departed Spirit vails
 A mere great name below : if worth him fails,
Nought else On High can for the Sinner plead :
None there can serve, howe'er here widely spread,
 But *Righteousness's* Fame : That one, indeed,
At Heaven's dread bar may stand us in some stead.

1860.

* Lycidas. v. 71.

THE WORLD.

SONNET 33.

“THE WORLD.” What then ! No name the base exalts :

Despise we its opinions, unless when

On justice based, as view'd by reason's ken :

For none right-sens'd 'tween vice and virtue halts.

Yet as co-equals — brethren — fellow-men,

Excuse we its errors — prejudices — faults ;

Some vices e'en, so conscience not revolts ;

And not as judg'd from bigotry's dark den.

In all indifferent — innocent — or light

We may go with the World ; so not to slight,

For friendliness and social intercourse ;

But, in all serious things, of blame or laud,

Obey we its stricter rules — tho' ill in force ;

And first, 'bove all, obeying The Law of God.

LIFE.

SONNET 34.

If at Life's close its phases to review,
Its joys—its sorrows weighing, pleasure—pain,
Perhaps not many, if they could renew,
Would wish to live their past lives o'er again.
Nor this but said of those who might complain
Of their severer lot, nor of the few
Where all enjoyment seems, but in the main—
In general on Mankind's condition's view.
But, note that chiefly thro' ourselves is this,
Our follies—faults—and all that done amiss,
Our wayward wills with duties still at strife;
Nor less remember we, however vex'd
With human ills, that, awful thought! this Life
Is but one of probation for *The Next*.

1861.

THE RIVER OF LIFE.

SONNET 35.

OR from the melting Glacier, brawling hoarse,
Down dropping still with melancholy song,
Or from Earth's bosom, roots and reeds among,
Spontaneous pour'd, the Streamlet takes its course.
By confluents swell'd, now fuller and more strong,
A bed for itself making in its course,
Pursuing its way with still augmenting force,
The rapid River seaward rolls along.
With numerous more, in the all absorbing Main
Mere added drops, whence soon exhaled again,
To feed the Glacier and supply the Spring.
E'en such is Life,—a moment in Time's flight;
With death renew'd, as Heaven's dread sentencing,
By Eternity's bright day or sunless night.

1861.

STONEHENGE.

SONNET 36.

Lo the huge blocks on Salisbury's bleak plain :
 (Like the vast piles on Egypt's arid sands)
 Unknown their date, for what—or by what hands
 Erected, now all hopeless to ascertain.
Curiosity in vain their Tale demands ;
 Nor History nor Tradition can explain ;
 Yet seems the name, *Stonehenge*, with no great strain,
 To point to Hengist and his Saxon bands.
But this is clear, by common reason kenn'd,—
 As they could serve no other, that their end
 Must have been worship of THE DEITY.
An added instance of the sense bestow'd
 On all Mankind, or blind or seeing their way,—
 The intuitive feeling of “ THE UNKNOWN GOD.”*

1861.

* Acts. xiii. 27.

PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE.

SONNET 37.

METHOUGHT, all round me desolate and bleak,
Where soar'd or Eagle's or the Condor's flight,
Beyond or Alps' or Andes' snow-capp'd height,
I stood on Himalaya's loftiest peak :
And to myself I said— ' Could these rocks speak :
 ' Drawn from the dark of long past ages' night,
 ' The earlier World's blank story bring to light,
 ' How much were found that now in vain to seek !'
But what to us could the history avail !—
 It could but tell of wrong, of sin, of crime,
 Of error—folly, suffering's sad detail.
Suffice it us our Present to survey ;
 To improve as best our narrow-bounded Time,
Ere call'd from that to an Eternity !

1861.

THE SEVEN SAGES OF GREECE.

SONNET 38.

THEIR favourite dicta with their names to give,
The Seven Sages of old Greece were these :
First BION__“ Look to friends as enemies ” :
As may become so, if we them aggrieve.
Next CHILO__“ Know thyself ” : lest self deceive.
PERIANDER__“ Prudence all accomplishes.”
Then CLEOBULUS__“ Half still better is
“ Than is the whole ” : the other half to leave.
THALES__“ Revere we Water,” ere aught skinks ;
As All’s great Parent and the best of drinks.
Then PITTACUS__“ Watch opportunity.”
Last SOLON__“ Look to the end in everything.”
With some exception to the first, we say—
All excellent maxims, well worth following !

1861.

BAYARD.

SONNET 39.

“ *SANS peur et sans reproche.*” BAYARD’S* device.

The last a glorious truly worthy boast ;
That who would claim must not consider price,
As never overpaid—at whatso cost.

Courage, tho’ of highest value, is with most
Mere strength of nerve : but, Virtue’s exercise,
Controul’d by passion and by interest cross’d,
Will often ask severe self-sacrifice.

Too seldom these combin’d : too oft we see
Bad actions in the boldest, if crime free ;
The former wink’d at for the latter’s sake.

Here let the Soldier, specially as such,
The gallant Gaul for his exemplar take,
In all, as “ Without fear, without reproach.”

1861.

* Born ——. Died 1524.

PROCRASTINATION.

SONNET 40.

PROCRASTINATION, "Thief of Time" well call'd ;
That robs us of it, strengthening its wings ;
The baleful habit of deferring things,
The Future for the Present thus forestall'd.
While every day, like rolling snow upball'd,
With still increasing weight that to us clings,
Its own especial business with it brings,
Which must be done, howe'er thereby sore gall'd.
Ne'er trust we to "To Morrow's" promis'd date ;
"To morrow" never comes, except too late.
But on this maxim act, in aught design'd :
In all avoid unnecessary delay ;
Ne'er putting off, save *bad* of whatso kind,
Until the next what can be done to day.

1861.

TOO LATE.

SONNET 41.

“ TOO LATE.” O with what self-reproach, shame, pain,
These two rebuking words are often heard !
From preparation thoughtlessly deferr’d ;
The moment once gone by — recall’d in vain.
The Boat, The Stage, The Steamer, and the Train,
The Past, the Appointment miss’d ; the fail’d-in word ;
The golden chance, that ne’er before occur’d,
Now lost, nor e’er to offer itself again.
Keep we to Time : perhaps still better even
If somewhat sooner, for some leisure given
To ponder on the moment’s business.
“ Too soon ”⁹ ne’er hurts ; at most it can but hurry us ;
While slow *Too Late* is always more or less
Offensive to others and to ourselves injurious.

1861.

THE FIRST SWALLOW.

SONNET 42.

HAIL, harbinger of Summer!¹⁰ now the Year,
New vested, dons her livery of green,
And changeful Spring has spent its breezes keen,
While austral Zephyrs fan the milder air.
But now whence com'st thou, and where hast thou been
Since quitting us? 'Neath Southern climes more fair;
Or torpid here, inapt our cold to bear,
Thee hiding in some shelter'd nook unseen?
But leave we this, as a disputed point:
Another with the question is conjoint,
That may a not unuseful hint supply:—
There's an old adage on the Tribe's First Comer,
'Gainst hastily on seemings to rely,
That says "One Swallow does not make a Summer."

1861.

HAPPINESS.

SONNET 43.

WHAT then, since in so many ways 't is sought,
Is *Happiness*? in what does it consist?
Does it in fact or but in fancy exist?
And how obtain'd, if so to be in aught?
Some seek it in self-will, doing as they list;
In action some; some quiet, doing nought;
In business some; some pleasure, dearly bought:
But, in whatever sought-for, mostly miss'd.
Yea, vain the search, as generally pursued;
What are mere adjuncts as essentials view'd,
Found all together in Contentment's one.
Real *Happiness* is wholly in the mind;
By wills controul'd, wants narrow'd, duties done,
Within ourselves we always may it find.

1861.

THE SEA.

SONNET 44.

DREAD Waters : that, within their circle vast
Confining Land, while every shore they lave ;
Fix'd within bounds* that not to be o'erpass'd ;
So limited, from overflow to save.
Uncertain still, now calm—for all to brave,
E'en as the Sky with not a cloud o'ercast,
Inviting pleasure on their peaceful wave ;
Now furious raging 'neath the tempest's blast.
As once they, Heaven's avenging bolts thus hurl'd,
To punish sin, o'erwhelm'd a guilty World,
Destin'd perhaps that World again to drown :
So be we still prepar'd, while ne'er offend
Against that Heaven, provoking its just frown,
To meet that Flood or whatso other End.

1861.

* Psalm 104. 9.

RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

SONNET 45.

LATE, at a solemn Conclave, held to free
From schisms—errors—doubts—or scruples mere,
That Church which in its pureness all revere,
Came *Truth*, to hear and its procedure see.
She knock'd for entrance. When, in tones austere,
“What want'st thou?” ask'd the Janitor. Answer'd she—
‘I'm *Truth*, and crave admittance.’ “Nay,” said he,
“Then get thee gone, *Truth* is not wanted here.”
When, nought discourag'd, turning her away,—
‘'T is well,’ she said, ‘my time will come one day,’
‘CHRIST'S Flock with better Pastors to supply.’
Nor shall her well-based expectation fail;
From her pure light shall Falsehood turn and fly;
For “*Truth* is great, and surely shall prevail.”*

1861.

* ESDRAS. iii. iv. 41.

BE GOOD.

SONNET 46.

IF in two words (this largely understood)
One could comprise the sum of what to call
‘ Life’s Law,’ our moral obligations all
And duties here, they might be these — *Be Good.*
Be righteous, kindly, generous, just withal ;
In every thing doing to others as we would
They should to us ; in all our ends pursued
Still seeking good, lest into evil fall.
O how consoling — cheering — at life’s close
To feel, in blamelessness’s calm repose,
From self-reproach as that of others free !
With faith-bas’d hope, to trust our sins forgiven,
At peace with both so far as Man may be,
While yet on Earth anticipating Heaven !

1861.

FAITH AND DOUBT.

SONNET 47.

CONCEIVE of Two, by some resistless power
Urg'd forward on, prevented thence to shrink,
To some Andesian precipice's brink,
Impell'd adown, at Life's concluding hour.
That, shuddering on the dread abyss to think,
All blank, while nameless horrors round him lour ;
This, Faith-sustain'd, sees nought at which to cower,
But seems on some rose-tinted cloud to sink.
The Sceptic and Believing Christian they :
Alike thus launch'd into Eternity ;
But O how different their condition there !
That—who shall say what future to be his !
This, sin-cleans'd, ransom'd, and redeem'd, to share,
With fellow sav'd-ones, unimagin'd bliss.

1861.

ON THE GREAT PYRAMID.

SONNET 48.*

I ASK'D of *Time* — “ To whom arose this vast
“ Majestic pile, that here now mouldering lies ?”
He nought replied ; but, as incessant flies,
With outspread wings, he swiftly by me pass'd.
To *Fame* I turn'd — “ O Thou ! whose praise defies
“ Forgetfulness, and makes all great to last :
“ Say—whose was this ?” With humid eyes downcast,
As one that mourns, she answer'd but with sighs.
Now turning from the mighty mass away,
While pondering on, I saw from stone to stone
Oblivion stalking with disdainful tread :
“ O Thou ! ” I cried, “ perhaps wilt tell me ; say.” —
When, checking me, in low and sullen tone,
‘ Whose ’t was I care not ; now ’t is mine.’ she said.

1861.

* From the Italian of PETROCCHI.

TIME.

SONNET 49.

As thoughtful, late, I mus'd on things below,
At early morn when day yet faintly gleam'd,
Uncertain if I fully wak'd or dream'd,
And dubious of external objects' show,—
I at distance saw a Form, that human seem'd,
Scythe-arm'd, as if some herbage bent to mow,
Towards me coming, but advancing slow.
In doubt if Fancy or a Vision seem'd,
While yet I look'd, unsure what it might be,
And thinking later I might better see,
Scarce heeding, while in silence all was hush'd,
With wide extended wings, that seem'd to spurn
The opposing air, it sudden by me rush'd:
'T was *Time* ; now past, and never to return !

1861.

THE LAST.

SONNET 50.

“THE LAST.” Sad thought: when parting from or Friends
Or Places to us dear, to think that this
May final be! so brief is human bliss;
So soon, as sure that, *Here Below All Ends!*
And surely Heaven for Man’s delight intends
All Earthly pleasures that in nought amiss:
Enjoy we, then, while our’s the present is,
Life—gladness—all that Heaven in nought offends.
And heed we lest give Friends offence or pain
While with them; as we ne’er again may see,
To heal the wound and their goodwill regain.
And generally so let our lives be pass’d,
As to others and ourselves, in all blame-free,
As not to fear whate’er for us THE LAST.

1861.



NOTES.

NOTES.

NOTE 1, PREFACE. Page x.

ONE of Shakspeare's Sonnets, that addressed to Mr. W. H. (No. xviii in the Collection) is very remarkable; for the prediction it makes in its concluding two lines of his own immortality as a Poet.

"So long as Man can breathe, or eyes can see,
"So long lives this, and this gives life to thee."

It is the only instance, I think, of anything of the kind in his whole works; and which may be freely pardoned him, not only from the positiveness of the fact, but for his general and most remarkable modesty as to whatever concerned himself.

It may be called his "*Exegi Monumentum*," and will be fully allowed by all who can read his language.

NOTE 2, PREFACE. Page xi.

THE *Rondeau* not being generally known among us, we here give three or four, two english and the others french, *de ma façon*, made for the nonce as specimens of the thing.

Now only think of nearly the twelve thousand (11.684) hexameter lines of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* being done into french in such a fantastical form as this! but of course it may be concluded in miniature, unavoidably very much abridged and free; but to which I cannot speak, never having been able to get a sight of the work.

RONDEAU.

HERE let us try our hand at a *Rondeau*.

And first, as every Reader may not know,

It may be well to mention what it is :

Namely—A Form of Poem (type of this)

Peculiar to French Poetry, altho'

It may be done in other tongues also :

Of Fifteen Lines, whereof eight rhymed in co:

And five like-rhymed, with two *fac similes*.

Arranged as here.

So far so good : we've done its most ; with no

Departure from its laws ; and now on go

To its completion, in no point remiss ;

Continuing thus, in nought our aim to miss.

Success ! 't is done, all its details to show,

Arranged as here.

1861.

RONDEAU.

CONFUSION seize the miscreant who first

Invented *Bills* ! of daily plagues the worst.

As if there were not ills enough before,

But we must have this vile annoyance more ;

Whate'er the sum required to be disburs'd,

And whether one be full or empty-purs'd,

Still "Pay—Pay—Pay," continually rehears'd :

As if one could n't have things without the bore

Of paying for them !

O for again the happy times of erst,

When all things were in common ! now revers'd :

Yea now, forsooth, if you run up a score,

In comes a "Little Bill ;" which vain to ignore.

Now, if to have things, you may be coer'd

To paying for them !——

1861.

RONDEAU.

Voyons si je pourrais faire un *Rondeau* :

Bien qu'il ne soit ni bon ni bel ni beau :

Car ce n'est point *La Muse* qui m'inspire,

Mais seulement demangeaison d'écrire.

Donc il me faut Huit Vers rimant en *eau*,

En *ire* cinq ; me creusant le cerveau

Pour deux en *ait* ; tous mis à leur niveau

Tout comme ici ; pour que je puisse dire

“ Le voilà fait.”

Courage ! en voici dix ; un grand fardeau,

Dont je m'allège ; y allant de nouveau

Pour ce qui reste en *eau* en *ait* et *ire*.

Or mon *Rondeau* enfin à sa fin tire :

Vivat ! Lecteur, je vous en fais cadeau :

Le voilà fait.

1861.

RONDEAU.

“ Bien commencé est à moitié fini.”

Dit le Proverbe, et sagement le dit

A l'œuvre donc : Ce que je me propose

Est de faire un *Rondeau*, si bien je l'ose.

Or il me faut Huit Vers rimant en *i*,

En *ose* cinq, et deux (pareils ceux ci)

En *fin* ; les tous placés tout comme ici.

C'est ainsi que j'exploiterai la chose,

Jusqu'à la fin.

Courage ! en voici les deux tiers de mis :

Il ne me reste à faire, après ceci,

Outre le tout dernier, que deux en *ose*

Et un en *i*. Or, sans besoin de glose,

Allant tant bien que mal, j'arrive ainsi

Jusqu'à la fin.

1861.

NOTE 3, SONNET 8. Page 22.

Early Death.

In the Valley of Cauca in Popayan S. A. they have public rejoicings at the funerals of those who die young—before adolescence; for their thus escaping the assaults of Satan—“ere Sin could blight”. With the Antients it was merely for their deliverance from earthly ills—the “fading sorrows.”

NOTE 4, SONNET 10. Page 24.

The Air Balloon.

Since doing this I have seen, in Mr. Hayward's Autobiography of Mrs. Piozzi V. 2. P. 177, a Sonnet on the same subject by PARINI; certainly in every respect superior to mine: but, nevertheless, not to have done this for nothing, I shall let it stand, trusting to the conventional “candour” of the Reader for its excuse.

NOTE 5, SONNET 17. Page 31.

Leaders.

This, tho' quite as much a Stop as any of the others, is not noticed in any of the several Treatises on Punctuation I have redd: It is called by the Printers “Leaders.” Its power is of suspension or hesitation, at times much the same as the Dash. It is generally much more used by the French than by ourselves: And it may here be observed that their Punctuation in general

is much more correct than ours; this chiefly from their using fewer Stops, as a multiplicity very generally causes inaccuracy and misconception.

About the Dash, or as called by the Printers Em-Rule, there is a peculiarity worth noticing: It is very generally, indeed always, put half way up between the letters; which makes it look more like an elongated Hyphen than a Dash: but I invariably put it *on the line*, that is—on a level with the bottom of the letters; which both clearly at once distinguishes it from the Hyphen and shows itself what it is, namely a Stop, and often one of great consequence, which it partly effects by being made longer or shorter according to the case. My claim to this improvement is, so to say, recorded in a Note at Page 61 of my Translation of *Vert-Vert*. 12^{mo}. London. 1840.

It may here be observed on Stops in general, that, from the often elliptical construction and its frequent inversions, they are much more necessary in Poetry than in Prose, and therefor require to be more closely noticed.

Among my numerous literary projects was a Treatise On Punctuation: This from noticing the very general inaccuracy of the thing even in our very best Writers; in many instances indeed where it might seem that Stops were put almost at random, often quite confusing the sense thro' their misuse.

As briefly here said in the Text, the object of Stops is to separate the different parts of a discourse so as to distinguish them one from another, and to part or connect them according to their relative context or otherwise. Generally speaking, the fewer stops used the better; both as more readily employed, and running less risk of inaccuracy from the use of many. It is on this principle, as may be supposed, that no stops whatever are used in Legal Documents; and which perhaps, tho' at first sight not clear, is the safest side, to prevent confusion and

misunderstanding. Our most accurately punctuated Writings are the Newspapers; from the same cause, and their not having time to use the more complicated system of many. Among my Papers will be found several Pages on the powers of the different Stops; but which I have never given myself time to reduce to a systematic whole. A perfectly good Treatise on Punctuation is still a desideratum, all the existing ones being more or less faulty.

NOTE 6, SONNET 20. Page 34.

Men should like Men be treated, Brutes like Brutes.

Among his other great and good qualities surely nobody will accuse Washington of the want of humanity, and therefor it will not be imputed to him in this case: It is related of him that—A Friend calling on him at his Residence Mount Vernon (after the Peace of 1783, which established the independence of The United States) seeing his late Charger at work among other cattle in the fields, asked him how he could be so comparatively ungrateful to his old Steed as to keep it at work instead of living at ease the rest of its life? To which he replied to the purport that—The Creature could not possibly know the particulars of its position, and therefor was equally insensible as to what they might be; and that, in short, Brute Beings should be treated as such and not as reasoning ones; and, if duly fed, not overworked, and treated generally with common humanity, it was quite enough for their well-being, and as much as they could possibly appreciate or could be claimed for them; and which I think will be generally allowed.

NOTE 7, SONNET 21. Page 35.

Caged Birds.

The French formerly were as remarkable for their loyalty and devotedness to their Sovereigns as they have in modern times been the contrary. Up to Louis XVI. it was customary, on the consecration of a new King, to give liberty to all caged Birds, as well as to some of the less criminal human prisoners: But "*on a changé tout cela.*"

On the occasion of Lord Nelson's visiting Naples after the Battle of the Nile, the Lazzaroni, sharing in the general joy for the discomfiture of the French, received him on landing with the most enthusiastic *Vivas!* and with their Birds in cages giving them liberty as he passed by.

NOTE 8, SONNET 32. Page 46.

Fame.

This is written not alone for the rigid Christian, who knows that the blood of THE SAVIOUR is the only really redeeming price for the Sinner—his only efficient ransom; but for all the more latitudinarian ones, and to Professors even of Natural Religion; as containing a principle of mere justice, equally applicable to all, and to which all are alike amenable.

It must therefor not be misconstrued, but taken generally.

Burke, not improbably prompted by Milton, calls the love of Fame "a passion which is the instinct of all great souls."

NOTE 9, SONNET 41. Page 55.

"Too soon" ne'er hurts; at most it can but hurry us.

Lord Nelson was used to say that he owed in a great measure his success in life to his having always made it a point of being a quarter of an hour *before the time*: a practice which in most cases will certainly be found equally good.

NOTE 10, SONNET 42. Page 56.

Hail, harbinger of Summer!

The Swallow among the Antients was held in a manner sacred, almost as much so as the Stork; and it was held highly impious as well as unlucky in any way to molest it. This probably from its being a forerunner of Summer, an always welcome season in even comparatively warm climates.

